

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 00181 112235Z
ACTION ARA-14

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P R 112010Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PN
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

FOLLOWING FROM USIS/PANAMA P R 112005Z JAN 78 SENT ACTION USINFO
WASHDC INFO SECSTATE WASHDC REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO:

QUOTE UNCLAS

MEDIA REACTION

E.O. 11652: N/A

1-PANAMA CITY.--SEMI-INDEPENDENT LA ESTRELLA AND STAR AND HERALD
FRONT-PAGE AP ITEMS JAN. 11, "STATE DEPARTMENT AFFIRMS CANAL
TREATY NEED NO CHANGES," AND "CARTER'S GOVT. INSISTS TREATY
NEEDS NO CHANGES." ALL PAPERS CARRY PHOTOS AND STORIES ON
JAN. 9 PRO-TREATY DEMONSTRATION AT THATCHER FERRY BRIDGE.
PRO-GOP CRITICA RUNS PAGE ONE TEASER FOR INSIDE PAGES STORY,
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"IF RATIFICATION FAILS, ARMS FOR LIBERATION."

2-CRITICA EDIT REITERATES OPPOSITION TO ANY AMENDMENTS TO
TREATY, AND SAYS SENATORS WHO DEMAND TREATIES BE CHANGED
"CONDITION THEIR VOTES ON MODIFICATIONS WHICH THEIR FEVERED
BRAINS SUGGEST, BECAUSE THEY MUST GIVE PRES. CARTER A
DEMONSTRATION OF ARROGANT AND ALL POWERFUL FORCE." GEN TORRIJOS,

CONTINUES CRITICA, HAS BEEN TACTICAL, BECAUSE HE "CANNOT ATTACH HIMSELF TO ETERNAL BATTLE. HE CERTAINLY UNDERSTANDS THAT IT IS NOT WORTH DISCUSSING ANY REFORMS WHICH CHANGE THE TREATIES. FOR THIS REASON HE REQUESTS SERENITY, WHICH HE HAS ALWAYS DONE IN DECISIVE MOMENTS...PANAMA WILL NOT CEDE TO AMENDMENTS."

3-PRO-GOP MATUTINO EDIT TOUCHES SAME THEME, AND SAYS 1978 IS BOTH END AND BEGINNING: "END OF A PAST OF INJUSTICE AND PRIVATION; BEGINNING OF AN ERA IN WHICH WE WILL ACHIEVE, BY OUR UNTIRING EFFORTS, THAT WHICH HAD BEEN DENIED TO US UNTIL WE DECIDED TO OBTAIN IT IN A TIME PERIOD WHICH WE OURSELVES FIXED."

4-MATUTINO COLUMN MOYOLANDIA REVIEWS RATIFICATION PROCESS, POINTING OUT THAT SENATE CAN AMEND TREATY, WHILE PANAMANIAN PLEBISCITE DID NOT ALLOW FOR THIS. SOME AMENDMENTS MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO PANAMANIANS, IF THEY DID NOT CHANGE SUBSTANCE OF TREATIES, BUT "WHAT SEEMS TO WORRY SOME SENATORS IS THAT THE NEUTRALITY PACT IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY PRECISE WITH RESPECT TO THE US' RIGHT TO INTERVENE. AND TO JUDGE BY WHAT THEY SAY, THEY DESIRE A PACT BY WHICH US TROOPS COULD ENTER HERE FREELY, WITH NO PRIOR WARNING AND BY UNILATERAL DECISION IN CASE OF DANGER. WHAT KIND OF SOVEREIGNTY WOULD WE HAVE IF THIS WERE ACCEPTED? WE CANNOT RUSH EVENTS. NOW WE MUST WAIT, AND OUR WAITING MUST BE PEACEFUL AND REASONABLE. THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE VIOLENT REACTION ON OUR PART AND

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THEREFORE WE SHOULD NOT PLAY THEIR GAME."

5-CAMILO PEREZ, DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA LAW SCHOOL AND PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE WORLD PEACE COUNCIL, WRITING IN HIS REGULAR "BONA FIDE" COLUMN IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CRITICA JANUARY 9 AND 11 CRITICIZES GOP HANDLING OF THE RECENT CODELS AND WARNS AGAINST TOO MUCH DELAY. IN HIS JAN. 9 COLUMN ENTITLED, "WHY SO MUCH INGENUOUS FLIRTING?" PEREZ COMPLAINS THAT IN ITS ATTEMPT TO PLAY UP TO THE MOST REACTIONARY SENATORS, THE GOP IS DELIBERATELY AVOIDING THE "PROGRESSIVE" ELEMENTS IN PANAMANIAN SOCIETY. "AND WHO HAS SAID THAT THE GRINGOS ARE SO INGENUOUS THAT THEY'RE GOING TO BELIEVE AT THIS STAGE OF THE PROCESS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS MADE UP OF ONLY CONEP TYPES?" (CONEP IS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, A PRO-BUSINESS PRESSURE GROUP) . . . AND THE AMERICAN SENATORS ARE NOT GOING TO SWALLOW THAT CREDIBILITY PILL SO EASILY BECAUSE THEY HAVE A DOSSIER ON ALL PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS. THEREFORE THE "COQUETRY" IS USELESS, INSIPID, AND WILL NOT ACHIEVE WHAT A MORE OPEN, LESS DIPLOMATIC AND MORE SINCERE APPROACH, WITHOUT ABUSING THE POLITICAL REALISM WHICH SHOULD INSPIRE ANY SUCH ACTIVITY, WOULD ACCOMPLISH."

6-PEREZ CONTINUES HIS ANALYSIS IN HIS JANUARY 11 COLUMN ZNTITLED "THE DIFFICULT POSITION OF TORRIJOS." ALLOWING THAT THE ATTENTION BEING PAID TO THE REACTIONARY SENATORS IS REQUIRED BY THE LATEST STRATEGY OF THE GOP TOWARD THE U.S. SENATE, PEREZ FEARS THAT, "THE ABUSE IN THE APPLICATION OF THAT SAME STRATEGY, WHICH MUST BE TEMPORARY, COULD DEGENERATE INTO GIVING THESE SAME (REACTIONARY PANAMANIAN) SECTORS AN UNCONTROLABLE THIRST FOR POWER."

7-PEREZ CONTINUES: "PRESIDENT CARTER IS GIVING AN IMPRESSION OF WEAKNESS AND OF SUBMITTING TO GROUPS OF SENATORS WHO ARE NOTHING MORE THAN OPPONENTS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION . . . (AND ONE IS LEAD TO BELIEVE THAT) SUCH OPPONENTS CAN GAIN MUCH MORE THAN PRESIDENT CARTER HIMSELF HAS GAINED THROUGH THE UNCLASSIFIED

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NEGOTIATIONS. THE INSISTENCE ON AMENDMENTS . . . WOULD FORTIFY THE AMERICAN REACTIONARIES AND WEAKEN PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESTIGE."

8-PEREZ CONCLUDES: "ALL IN ALL, WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS, FULLY AWARE OF SUCH PERSPECTIVES, COULD ADMIT THE POSSIBILITY OF A RE-PLAY BUT WITHOUT FORGETTING THAT HERE IN PANAMA WE WILL NEVER ACCEPT A MOVE BACKWARD AND EVEN LESS A WORSENING OF A TREATY THAT WE ALL KNOW IS NOT GOOD . . . FRANKLY, THE JOB OF THE PANAMANIAN IS VERY DIFFICULT AND WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THE PROGRESSIVE FORCES CAN STAND SO MUCH POSTPONING AND HUMILLIATION."

9-LUIS RESTREPO IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO JANUARY 11 KEEPS UP HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CONGRESS BUT INDIRECTLY THROUGH A COLUMN ON THE TONGSUN PARK SCANDAL WITH THE FOLLOWING CONCLUDING PARA: "WHEN THE PEOPLE DOWN HERE REALIZE WHAT IS HAPSPENING UP THERE IN THE CONGRESS OF THE NATION OF THE NORTH, IT WILL BE KNOWN THAT 'EN TODAS PARTES SE CUECEN HABAS' (THEY COMMIT SHAMEFUL ACTS EVERYWHERE) AND THAT THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO TRAVEL THROUGH BROWN AMERICA AS DEVINE REPRESENTATIVES OF ETHICS, MORALITY AND THE FAIR PLAY OF THE INSTITUTIONS THEY REPRESENT." ITEM UNQUOTE
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